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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2149

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000120

SIPDIS

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL IS KPAL LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: ISF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER TARGETED IN  
LATEST ASSASSINATION

REF: 007 BEIRUT 1950

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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**¶11.** (S) A huge car bomb explosion rocked the Chevrolet-Furn al-Chubbak area of east Beirut on January 25 killing Internal Security Forces (ISF) intelligence officer Captain Wissam Eid, his bodyguard, and at least two others, and injuring dozens. Eid, an Embassy contact, was in charge of the ISF's intelligence unit. He played a significant role in a number of sensitive investigations, including UNIIIC investigations into the assassination of former PM Rafiq Hariri and others. Residents of Deir Ammar, Eid's birthplace in northern Lebanon, demonstrated to condemn his murder.

**¶12.** (C) This latest assassination, occurring merely ten days after an Embassy vehicle was the target of a car bomb attack, marks the sixteenth politically-motivated attack and ninth political assassination in the last three and a half years (starting with the 2004 attack on MP Marwan Hamadeh. More ominously, the frequency, target audience, and intensity of the bombings all seem to be expanding as Lebanon enters its third month without a president and with no end to the political deadlock in sight. End summary.

A MESSAGE TO THE ISF

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**¶13.** (C) On January 25, 2008, at approximately 1010 local time, a car bomb detonated near the Chevrolet Circle, in the Hazmieh area of mainly Christian east Beirut, killing Lebanese intelligence officer Captain Wissam Eid, his bodyguard (name not yet disclosed), and at least six others. The Director General of the ISF, General Ashraf Rifi, confirmed the death of Eid and his bodyguard, telling press at the scene of the explosion that a booby trapped car probably caused the explosion. The ISF, he said, is investigating the amount of explosives used in the attack, which it presumes involved a relatively large bomb, based on the huge crater left in the ground.

**¶14.** (SBU) Rifi, referring to the December 12 bomb that killed Lebanese Armed Forces Operations Director Francois al-Hajj (reftel), said, "It is clear that a message was sent to the LAF through the death of al-Hajj. The second message is to the ISF through targeting Eid." He said institutions protecting the country are being targeted and reiterated the ISF's determination to pursue its mission to protect the

country.

A BLOW TO THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

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¶5. (S) Rifi described Eid as an "an important officer who worked on special files, including the UNIIIC investigation." UNIIIC officials told us that initial media reports that Eid had been returning from a meeting with UNIIIC when he was hit were untrue, but that he had visited UNIIIC headquarters a week ago, on January 18.

¶6. (C) Eid also had a role in two other terrorist incidents. He participated in the May 19-20, 2007 ISF raid on Fatah al-Islam (FAI) militants near the Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in northern Lebanon that led to the three-month long battle between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces. He also participated in the investigation of the February 2007 twin bus bombings in Ain Alaq outside of Beirut, an attack for which FAI claimed responsibility. Eid had previously been targeted for assassination on February 12, 2006. He was a close contact of the Embassy.

HOMETOWN VILLAGERS PROTEST

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¶7. (C) Eid was from a prominent family in the village of Deir Ammar, next to the al-Bedawi Palestinian refugee camp, and not far from the city of Tripoli and the Nahr al-Barid camp. The mayor of Bhannine (a village near Deir Ammar), Mustapha Wehlbeh, told Embassy staff that protesters, mainly Eid's family members, closed the main highway going from Tripoli to the northern Syria border to condemn Eid's killing. Media reports indicate the road was reopened at 1345 local time.

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MARCH 14 MPS POINT AT SYRIA

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¶8. (SBU) Eid's family also was close to the Hariris. According to Hariri-bloc MP Mustafa Allouch, the Eid family, including approximately 7,000 people, is one of the largest families in the village of Deir Ammar, and the overwhelming majority voted for the Hariri-backed list during the 2005 parliamentary election.

¶9. (SBU) Allouch expressed his fear that the international community might get tired of Lebanon and resort to handing Lebanon back to the Syrians. Allouch said the Syrians were systematically destroying the country and wondered if the international community would continue to stand by idly. MP Mosbah Ahdab indicated that he would urge March 14 to proceed with electing a president under a simple majority rule.

COMMENT

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¶10. (C) The frequency, range of targets, and intensity of the bombings all seem to be expanding as Lebanon enters its third month without a president and with no end to the political deadlock in sight. Eid's assassination is the second against Lebanon's security forces in two months. Previous attacks targeted political and media figures known for their outspoken resistance to Syrian tutelage of Lebanon. Eid and al-Hajj were better known for their efforts to combat FAI and their technical and field successes in uncovering and thwarting terrorist operations.

¶11. (C) As with the al-Hajj killing, the motive for the assassination is not immediately obvious. Many possible motives have been suggested for the al-Hajj killing: his connection to Nahr al-Barid, someone sending a message to LAF commander and presidential candidate Michel Sleiman, Hizballah taking action to keep al-Hajj from replacing Sleiman as army commander. The Eid killing is likely to

produce similar diverse interpretations. It is inevitable that some will link the attack to the ongoing political stalemate and allegations of Syrian interference. Feeding this line of thinking, the Syrian National News Agency reported that General Sleiman called President Asad shortly after the bombing. Eid's well-known links to the Hariri assassination investigation as an expert on telephone intercepts, as well as his involvement in Nahr al-Barid, will lead to theories that his killing is an attempt to obstruct investigations into terrorist activities. End comment.

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